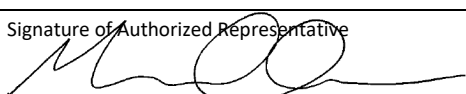


# BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION

## For Fiscal Year 2022

Primary Applicant (Name and Address):  Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC 417 Pine Street Green Bay, WI 54301 (920) 940-0138	Applications MUST be UPLOADED to ERF via the Commission's website, <a href="http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx">http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx</a> . Refer to section 2.3 for detailed instructions.  Applications are due and MUST be uploaded to ERF no later than: <b>March 17, 2022</b> at 4:00pm (16:00) Central Time. <b>Late applications will not be accepted.</b>	
	Contact for further information: <a href="mailto:PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov">PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov</a>	
	Date: March 17, 2022	
<p>The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is seeking applications for Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission may award one or more grants during Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private entities that meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504. This grant round will be funded with bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As such, successful applicants are subject to the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants will demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more underserved areas in the State.</p>		
<p><b>Applicant Certification:</b> In signing this application, the undersigned verifies under penalty of perjury that the Applicant and its employees and agents have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition with respect to this application; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application; that this application has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this application has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the opening of applications to any other applicant or competitor; that all of the responses and representations of Applicant in this application are true and correct to the best of the undersigned's knowledge, information, and belief; and that Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with all of the terms and conditions respecting this application and any award of a broadband expansion grant as may be established in a grant award Agreement.</p>		
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print)  Mitchel Olson	Title  Chief Development Officer   General Counsel	Phone (    )  920.940.0138
Signature of Authorized Representative 	Date  March 17, 2022	

## SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name  Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar)  \$877,200
Federal Employer Identification No.  20-0284635	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar)  \$3,508,800
Contact Name and Title  Mitchel Olson – Chief Development Officer   General Counsel	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar)  \$4,386,000
Telephone Number  920.940.0138	Project Name  R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality - Taylor County
E-mail Address(es)  mitchel.olson@bugtusselwireless.com	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.)  FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant  N/A	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other)  Middle-mile / Last-mile
Grant Manager Contact Name  N/A	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number  N/A
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the names, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations  Taylor County 224 South Second Street Medford, WI 54451	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences)  The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This project is “Open Access” allows for future expansion and encourages faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which supports immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.	
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed  1 Gbps	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed  1 Gbps
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location  200 mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location  200 mbps

<p>County or Counties served by this project</p> <p>Taylor County</p>	<p>Community or Communities served by this project</p> <p>Town of Browning, Town of Goodrich, Town of Greenwood, Village of Rib Lake, Town of Rib Lake, Town of Aurora, Town of Chelsea, Town of Cleveland, Town of Ford, Town of Grover, Town of Hammel, Town of Jump River, Town of Mckinley, Town of Medford, Town of Molitor, Town of Westboro</p>
<p>List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve</p> <p>CenturyLink, Frontier Communications, TDS, Country Wireless, NSight, US Cellular</p>	
<p>Does proposed project serve an <u>unserved</u> area of the State, as defined in <a href="#">Section 1.4</a> of the application instruction? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>For last mile projects or component the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access).</p> <p>34</p>	<p>For last mile projects or components the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access).</p> <p>653</p>
<p>Of the improved business locations, how many locations are <i>unserved</i>?</p> <p>34</p>	<p>Of the improved residential locations, how many are <i>unserved</i>?</p> <p>653</p>
<p>For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2021? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes</p>	

# FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application

## Budget & Income Summary



Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

### Grant Summary

Grant Applicant:	Project:
Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC	R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality - Taylor County

### Budget

Line:	Description / Category:	Grant Funds:	Match:	Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$ 635,992.40	\$ 2,543,969.60	\$ 3,179,962.00
2	Equipment	\$ 52,240.00	\$ 208,960.00	\$ 261,200.00
3	Supplies	\$ 129,684.00	\$ 518,736.00	\$ 648,420.00
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)	\$ 40,233.60	\$ 160,934.40	\$ 201,168.00
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees	\$ 19,050.00	\$ 76,200.00	\$ 95,250.00
6	Travel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
7	Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total:		\$ 877,200.00	\$ 3,508,800.00	\$ 4,386,000.00
80.0% match requested				

### Pledged Contributions

#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Bug Tussel Wireless / Taylor County - Partnership	Applicant	Cash	\$ 2,008,800.00
2	Taylor County	Partner	Cash	\$ 1,500,000.00
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total:				\$ 3,508,800.00



— Proposed Fiber Route     PSC - Underserved  
— Existing Middle-Mile     PSC - Unserved

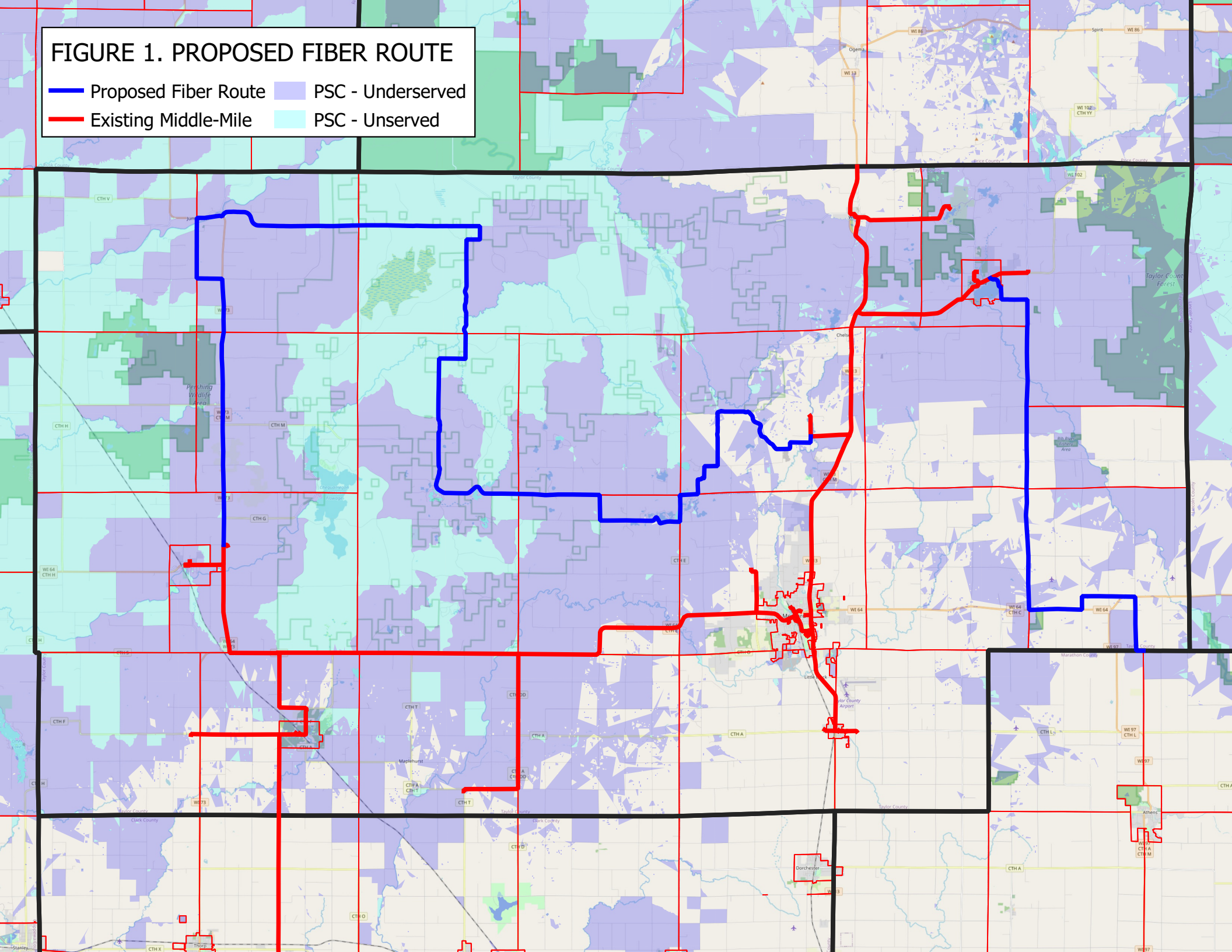
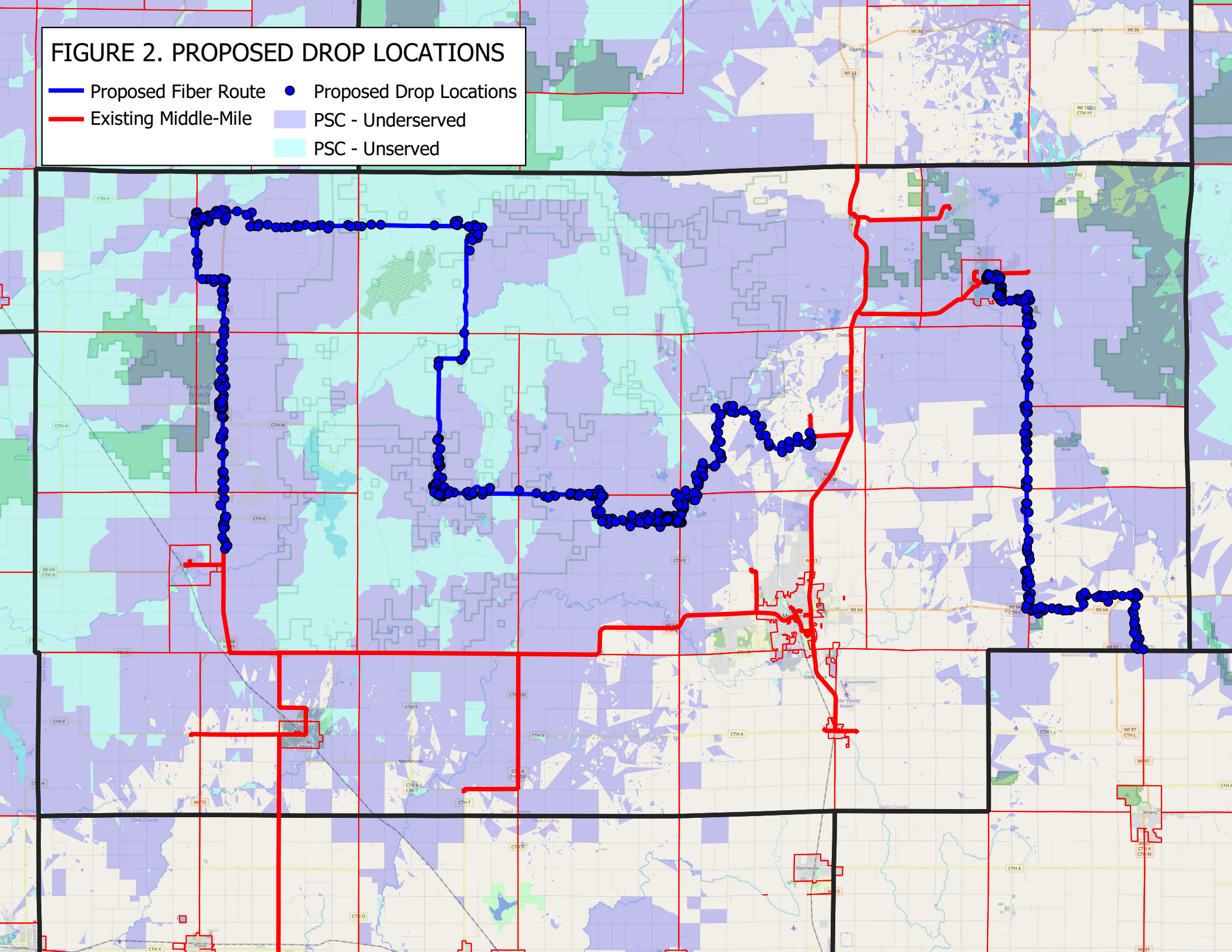


FIGURE 2. PROPOSED DROP LOCATIONS

- Proposed Fiber Route
- Existing Middle-Mile
- Proposed Drop Locations
- PSC - Underserved
- PSC - Unserved



### **3.2 Mandatory application requirements**

#### **3.2.1 Applicant identification and contact information**

**a. The name and address of the entity applying for the grant, and the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of one or more contact persons representing the applicant.**

Name of Entity: Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC ("Bug Tussel")  
Mailing Address: 417 Pine Street  
Green Bay, WI 54701  
  
Contact: Mitchel Olson  
Title: Chief Development Officer | General Counsel  
Phone: 920.940.0138  
Email: mitchel.olson@bugtusselwireless.com

**b. If the application proposes a public-private partnership, the identity and contact information for all application partners.**

Name of Entity: Taylor County  
Mailing Address: 224 South Second Street  
Medford, WI 54451  
  
Contact: Mr. Michael Bub  
Title: County Supervisor  
Phone: 715.965.7748  
Email: michael.bub@co.taylor.wi.us

**c. The application must show that the applicant is an organization, a telecommunications utility, or a city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility, and as such meets the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504(1).**

Hilbert Communications, LLC, and its subsidiary, Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC, are Wisconsin Limited Liability Companies, with their headquarters located at 417 Pine Street, Green Bay, WI 54701, and are Eligible applicants, as defined by §196.504(1)(ac)(1).

#### **3.2.2 Description of the project**

**a. A static map and description of the area of the State that will be affected by the proposed project.**

Please see the enclosed project maps, located on pages 5 and 6. The enclosed maps show the proposed middle-mile route throughout Taylor County, but the impact will be well beyond the route as shown. Future expansion projects, utilizing the middle-mile, will reach beyond the original territory served in this phase of deployment. With these additional projects, all of Taylor County will be affected by this project.

**b. If the project area lies within a census block designated as served on the PSC Broadband Map, provide additional documentation to demonstrate the actual broadband service that is available in the proposed project area.**

As shown in **Figures 1 and 2** above, there is a significant need for expanded broadband access in Taylor County. Outside of the largest population center, the City of Medford, nearly the entire County is listed by the PSC as unserved or underserved.

Taylor County lacks the infrastructure, specifically a fiber optic middle mile, necessary for expanded FTTP access in the future, including in those census blocks designate as served, albethem few and far between.

**c. An explanation of how the proposed project will increase broadband access. Include information about the:**

This project will increase broadband access by making last-mile fiber to the premises connections, in addition to installing middle-mile fiber with substantial capacity for expansion.

This project will have the capacity to service the 653 households located along the fiber route, in addition to the 34 business. Of those, 653 homes and 34 businesses are in underserved and unserved areas.

The fiber to the premises packages available will include a symmetrical 200 mbps download / 200 mbps upload option for \$64.99, in addition to a 1 Gbps download / 1 Gbps upload option for \$99.99.

**d. A statement whether the proposed project is targeting the “last mile,” “middle mile,” or backbone portion of the broadband infrastructure.**

The proposed project will consist of both middle-mile and last-mile assets. The proposed project area is in significant need of additional backbone infrastructure and capacity, with last-mile connections being made along that route to promote a “dig-once” construction model.

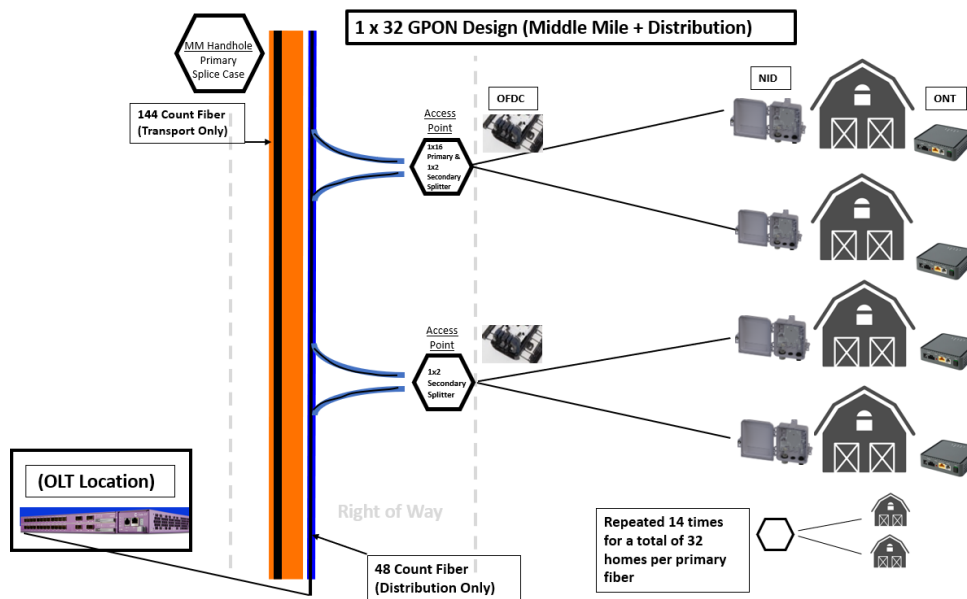
**e. A description of the broadband service to be provided, including estimated download and upload speeds, whether the speed is based on dedicated or shared bandwidth, and the technology that will be used. This description may be illustrated by a map or schematic diagram, as appropriate.**

The network will consist of fiber optic cable connected to GPON/ONT electronics that will provide capacity for over 1 Gbps to each residence and business along the fiber route along with Dense Wave Division Multiplexing (DWDM) equipment for traffic aggregation, capable of supporting 200 to 800 Gbps.



As shown in Figure 3 below, a 144 strand transport fiber will be buried alongside a separate 48 strand fiber that will be utilized for fiber to the premises.

**Figure 3 – Middle-mile and Distribution Design.**



**f. For middle mile projects:**

At this time, no additional last-mile connections can be disclosed publicly. That said, Bug Tussel with itself be making last mile connections utilizing the middle-mile for transport.

Connections incident to this grant application will be made within the two-year construction window contemplated for this project, and additional last-mile projects will be completed, by both Bug Tussel and other internet service providers, in the years that follow.

By making the last-mile connections along the middle-mile route simultaneous to the installation of the middle-mile, it will not be necessary to perform additional construction projects along the same route. This conforms to the “dig-once” construction model, saving both time and construction expense.

**g. A schedule by which the applicant intends to complete the components of the proposed project. The project period is up to 24 months.**

Final route design, in conjunction with Bug Tussel’s partners, and engineering will commence immediately following the announcement of the grant award. This process will last through the end of 2022, with construction beginning in early 2023. Construction of the main-line fiber is anticipated to be completed in June, 2023, with last-mile drops and installations beginning shortly thereafter. It is Bug Tussel’s expectation that the project with be completed by June, 2024.

### 3.2.3 Itemized Budget (all amounts should be rounded to the nearest dollar)

- a. In addition to the Summary of Project Budget that is included as page 3, applicants should include a price list or quote for any equipment the applicant intends to purchase, including capital expenditures. The application should also indicate whether any facilities involved would be owned, rented, or leased.

At this time, Bug Tussel does not intend to purchase any equipment to facilitate construction pursuant to this grant application. All assets installed incident to this project will be owned and operated by Bug Tussel, or a related entity.

- b. The application must show that the grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of a telecommunications provider or the monthly bills of telecommunications customers. For purposes of this grant program, subsidize means a contribution to the operating costs, including profit, of the telecommunications provider.

The sole purpose of the grant contemplated herein is to facilitate the construction of fiber assets. The grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of Bug Tussel, nor will it be used to subsidize the costs paid by customers.

- c. The application must show that the grant funds requested will be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas covered by the application. Construction of broadband infrastructure may include any of the following:

Other than the work done in formulation of this grant application, no planning, engineering, permitting, or construction has taken place. All of the costs of this project, as identified on the enclosed budget, will be incurred during the performance period.

### 3.2.4 Priority factors supporting the application

- a. **Matching funds.** A description of the matching funds the applicant will invest in the proposed project, if any. For each element, indicate the type of match (cash, salary expense, or in-kind contribution). If the application is submitted by a partnership, identify the partner responsible for providing each element of the proposed matching funds. *Note: The requirement for this information is satisfied via inclusion of the completed Funding Statement as page 4 of the application.*

As discussed in Section b below, through the R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Program, and additional funding sources, Bug Tussel and its partner are pledging a total of \$3,508,800, or 80% of the total project cost.

- b. **Public-private partnerships.** If the public-private partnership is memorialized in a joint venture agreement or other writing, provide a copy of that agreement. If the partnership has not been reduced to a written agreement, provide a short description of the management role, financial commitment, or other contribution to the project for each participating partner.

To fund this project, Bug Tussel is utilizing a conduit bond issuance called the Rural Open Access Design (R.O.A.D.) to Digital Equality. In this public private partnership, the County's contribution to the project will take the form of an underlying guaranty on the bond issuance, and Bug Tussel will be responsible for all payments and costs associated with the project. Bug Tussel will own and operate all assets, and the county will benefit through free use of the fiber for governmental purposes for the lifetime of the bonds in addition to other financial considerations.

The creation of the public private partnership between Bug Tussel and Taylor County is memorialized by an Agreement to Establish Public Private Partnership for the Purpose of Applying for a Broadband Expansion Grant (attached as **Exhibit A**). Moreover, Taylor County is contributing \$1,500,000 outside of the bond issuance, which further demonstrates their commitment to this project.

**c. Existing broadband service. A list of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:**

The design of the project contemplated herein has given significant priority to areas avoided by existing internet service providers. Although the middle-mile route passes through areas with existing service, this is a necessary step to develop a reliable broadband network through the project area.

As shown on Table 1 below, several providers have some level of coverage in the project area. This coverage, however, is rarely, if ever, capable of reliably providing broadband service at speeds of 25 mbps download / 3 mbps upload. The services currently offered in the project area do not meet the needs of the residences and businesses in the project area, which is our sole motivator in undertaking this project.

**Table 1. Internet Service Providers.**

Service Provider	Technology Platform	Price Range	Advertised Download Speeds	Advertised Upload Speeds
CenturyLink	DSL	Unknown without service address	15 mbps	.75 mbps
Frontier Communications	DSL	Unknown with service address	12 mbps	1.0 mbps
TDS	DSL	Unknown with service address	15 mbps	2.0 mbps
Country Wireless	Fixed Wireless	\$74.99/month	25 mbps	5 mbps
Nsight	Fixed Wireless	Unknown without service address	0.7 mpbs	0.4 mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	Unknown without service address	2.0 mbps	.064 mbps

Insofar as the middle-mile portion of this project is concerned, installation of the middle-mile pursuant to this project will substantially limit future construction costs related to additional last-mile projects. County governments, municipalities, commercial organizations, and economic development advocates have all identified the need for expanded middle-mile transport to meet current needs, anticipate future needs, and to promote economic development.

The design of the middle-mile route was done in cooperation with Taylor County, wherein County officials were able to provide first-hand knowledge of existing broadband assets. This information was utilized to avoid existing areas with adequate coverage if at all possible, while still accomplishing County objectives and allowing for the development of a robust middle-mile capable of serving all of the communities throughout Taylor County.

**d. Project impact. A description of the geographic area and the population, both in terms of absolute numbers and likely users, which will be served by the proposed project. Indicate the number of anticipated residential and business customers in the project area, if known. Explain the speed and quality of internet service that will be available. Include information about the range of packages available for purchase. Provide details on any low-income access programs and steps the project will take to support adoption.**

This project will have a profound impact on broadband access in Taylor County. Of the 687 homes and businesses that will be able to immediately take service off the middle-mile fiber route, all 687 are outside of metropolitan areas where broadband service is severely lacking, both in terms of access and affordability.

This expanded access will enable improvements in the lives of the residents of Taylor County by enabling remote work opportunities, improving access to educational opportunities, and enhancing access to medical services and information.

**e. Scalability. A description of how the proposed project could expand or improve the broadband service it delivers, while maintaining the quality of its broadband service. This description should include specific projected increases in the following parameters that are known at the time of the application:**

Bug Tussel is undertaking a significant fiber-optic build out across Wisconsin, with proposed projects in more than 45 of the 72 counties. When completed, this will create a statewide, rural focused fiber optic network with as many as 60 redundancies between the end user and the destination of their data traffic.

For too long, networks have been designed on an ad hoc basis, connecting only those areas with significant enough population to allow for a quick return on investment. This has resulted in unreliable networks that travers through entire communities without making connections to the residents. Bug Tussel has designed networks that focus first on reliability and need, and has found that profitably follows closely when you put the community, and its residents, first.

The project contemplated herein, as part of the statewide network design, will have the capacity to serve significantly more than the 687 homes and businesses first able to take service. There will be 4 network aggregation points along the middle-mile, allowing future projects to expand in every direction with the capacity to provide service for the totality of Taylor County, and beyond.

As shown on **Figures 1 and 2** above, this project is Phase II of a middle-mile ring throughout Taylor County. This completion of the ring is necessary to create sufficient network reliability, in addition to providing coverage in the portions of the county not served by Phase I of the project.

Bug Tussel is installing a 144 strand transport fiber as its middle-mile. Of those 144, 24 have been given to Taylor County through the public private partnership. Of the remaining 120 fibers, 48 fibers will be used for transport related FTTN, fixed wireless broadband, and cellular traffic, leaving 72 fibers, or one half of the installed assets, of additional capacity for future growth and expansion.



**f. Economic development. A description of how the proposed project will promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region. This description may be supplemented with a letter from one or more persons discussing the potential economic impact the project could have for that individual or business. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:**

County governments, municipalities, commercial organizations, and economic development advocates have all identified the need for expanded broadband and fiberoptic backbone transport facilities to meet current needs, to anticipate future needs, and to promote economic development. The presence of these facilities does not guarantee economic success but the lack of broadband and fiberoptic backbone transport guarantees the likelihood of economic stagnation and a potentially substandard economic development atmosphere. Getting access to high-speed internet can be crucial to a community's economic and social success. It helps retain and grow businesses and improves the quality of life for everyone with increased opportunities for quality education and easier healthcare. As rural businesses become more productive and thrive, so does the community's economy. The effects can be felt beyond one community, spilling into the entire region and the state.

A 2019 study by the UW-Extension noted that a 10% increase in Internet speeds at the county level leads to average increased housing values from \$230 to \$661. The study also quantified that as more households reach these increased speed, quantifiable results will be seen in higher township tax revenues.

When considering the effect of "internet coverage" one typically thinks of email and browsing the internet. The economic reality of a robust communications network is critical for the following applications:

- Law enforcement and public safety from local agencies to the FBI/CIA and FEMA.
- Educational purposes in schools and to reduce costs for school districts through online textbooks and lifelong learning processes.
- Agricultural purposes such as irrigation controls, mapping of soil conditions, amount of fertilizer needed per square meter or yard, yield mapping, monitoring cows for milk fever or bloat, asset management, logistics for fuel and commodity delivery.
- Transportation purposes such as trucking logistics and safety, railroad switching and monitoring of bearings to prevent derailments, package tracking, management of delivery routes and many others.
- Home security and automation including childcare oversight, geriatric monitoring, ambient intelligence where personal preferences are automatically implemented in a home or business, security alarms and monitoring, monitoring critical appliances such as freezers and refrigerators, sump pumps, and HVAC controls.

- Medical and health purposes such as blood clot monitoring, oversight of insulin and pain pumps, in home cancer treatments, exercise and diet monitoring, heart monitoring and automatic adjustment of pacemakers and other heart monitors, attention and communication tools for those suffering from autism, cerebral palsy or other communication limiting diseases.
- Remote delivery and transportation systems such as drones and self-driven vehicles.

Improved broadband coverage throughout Taylor Lake County will also enhance the many recreational opportunities available to both individuals that live in the county and to visitors to the county.

To encourage economic development and to service the needs of current and future residents, Taylor County is banding together with Bug Tussel in a public-private partnership to create a fiberoptic network supplemented with wireless communications towers throughout Taylor County that accomplishes the following:

1. Meets current needs for industry, healthcare, governmental and emergency management entities, education, agriculture and tourism while anticipating the future needs of those stakeholders.
2. Provides access to broadband infrastructure facilities to connect cities, villages and towns to larger networks that span the globe making Taylor County part of the ever-developing global economy.

Provides superior speeds for data and other communications accessible for residents and visitors to Taylor County that compete with major metropolitan areas and thereby “levels the playing field” for rural Wisconsin.

**g. Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas. A description of whether the proposed project will or will not impair the ability of a broadband service provider or competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project area.**

This project is about open-access expansion. In addition to compromising their reliability for the sake of profits, ad hoc networks that focus on dense, isolated population areas have a detrimental effect on future development.

Bug Tussel’s middle-mile/last-mile fiber will allow immediate access to those along the route, and it was designed not with dense population areas as the prime motivator. This will facilitate further development, by Bug Tussel and other competing broadband service providers, by greatly reducing the cost to serve even the most remote customers.

### 3.2.5 Other information supporting the application

**a. A description of applicant's history or experience constructing broadband communications facilities in the State and elsewhere.**

As a growth oriented company with a statewide footprint, Bug Tussel has a long history of undertaking projects of this magnitude.

Through the PSC, Hilbert Communications, and its subsidiaries, have been awarded a number of grants, as shown on Table 2 below. All projects have been completed, or are in the process of being completed, within the parameters outlined in each respective grant application:

**Table 2. Grant Awards.**

Grant	Year	Technology	Status	Customers
Oneida County - I	2015	Fixed Wireless	Completed	199
Oneida County – II	2017	Fixed Wireless	Completed	256
Florence County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	42
Oneida County – III	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	179
Juneau County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	25
Green County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	93
Oneida County – IV	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	169
LaFayette County	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	24
Green Lake County	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	31
Town of Deerfield	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	7
Oneida County – V	2019	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Kewaunee County	2020	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Menominee County	2020	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Forest County	2020	Fixed Wireless / Fiber	Pending	Pending
Green County	2020	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Iowa County	2020	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Florence County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Fond du Lac County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Iron County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Wood County – SW	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Wood County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Kewaunee County	2021	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Forest County	2022	Fiber	Pending	Pending

Bug Tussel completed a number of American Rescue Plan Act Broadband Access Grant applications that were not awarded, and four of those projects will commence irrespective of the grant award. Construction on fiber-optic networks in Marathon, Waushara, Calumet, and Fond du Lac Counties will begin this spring.

**b. A description of how the proposed project will or will not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure.**

The project area is one where legacy providers have not continued to make the investments necessary to support modern technological advancement. As discussed above, existing access exists only in areas where profitability facilitated the investment, which leaves large geographic tracts throughout Taylor County with little to no broadband access.

This necessitates the installation of a middle-mile, from which future expansions efforts can grow. The existing middle-mile infrastructure, in addition to being sparse, was not installed to facilitate widespread FTTP. The middle-mile contemplated here reaches far into the corners of the county, enabling low cost projects to make last mile connections.

**c. A description of an applicant's financial ability to undertake the proposed broadband construction project. This may include information such as the number of years the company has been in operation, documentation of successful completion of similar infrastructure projects, evidence that sufficient funds are available to cover project expenditure and match, customer turn-over rates, and credit rating.**

Bug Tussel Wireless was founded in 2003, and in 2008 joined forces with McKinley Reserve and Paul Gehl to form Hilbert Communications through a merger of seven companies. With the goal to remedy the dire need for broadband and cellular access of those living in rural communities, Bug Tussel has grown substantially in its nearly 20 year history.

The core investment group has made investments in rural wireless and broadband in excess of \$30 million and is currently completing a series of financing agreements to fund over \$500,000,000 of new capital projects through a number of joint ventures with private equity firms and public bond issuances. Consolidated revenues per Hilbert's most recent audited financial statements is nearly \$65,000,000, a doubling year on year increase.

Bug Tussel has a proven track record of operating, maintaining, and continually investing in its network to provide its thousands of rural customers with the best technologies on the market. Collaborating with partners like AT&T, Bug Tussel currently operates approximately 600 broadband and cellular sites throughout rural Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa. Further, Bug Tussel has a rapidly expanding fiber footprint with existing fiber assets in Forest and Oconto Counties, as well as ongoing projects in Iowa, Green, Kewaunee, Marathon, Forest, Fond du Lac, Calumet, and Waushara Counties all set to be completed in 2022.

Bug Tussel and its subsidiaries can provide turnkey solutions for nearly any rural community. From site acquisition, tower construction, network operations, and sales and service, Bug Tussel can connect rural communities and keep residents competitive with larger urban centers.

Bug Tussel has been very deliberate in its network design creating significant redundancies through the use of “ring design” and a combination of over the air and fiberoptic connectivity resulting in industry high performance standards. This design and reputation resulted in the award of construction and operational contracts with AT&T for a portion of the FirstNet® National Emergency Communications Network. Bug Tussel brings the same reliability and redundancy design to an individual customer in rural Wisconsin as it does to a national emergency communications network.

Bug Tussel also believes that networks need to be sustainable and as such cannot be reliant on future grants or funding but must seek creative ways in rural markets to leverage assets. This application and our entire network leverages assets and relationships to create a superior network. Bug Tussel is in the final stages of a national build agreement with AT&T, with nearly 350 sites completed across Wisconsin and southwestern Iowa that also provides a basis for our broadband network and makes broadband possible on AT&T’s network. Since 2018, Bug Tussel has ramped its site acquisition and construction teams from 2 to 4 sites per month to up to 20 sites per month and has completed nearly 200 sites in a single year. These sites met the stringent quality standards of FirstNet and of AT&T. They also met our own stringent quality standards for each rural customer.

**d. For middle mile projects, state the terms under which the applicant will make its middle mile fiber resource available to last mile providers. Without disclosing project-specific or customer-specific negotiated rates for service or access, state whether access to the middle mile fiber resource will be offered to last mile providers at a rate that is reasonable and common to the industry. Describe any restrictions or limits that may limit the availability or interconnection with the middle mile route.**

Bug Tussel’s network is open to all providers, and we believe that by strategically placing the fiber in unserved or underserved areas and opening the DWDM network to other providers, that the speed of deployment for other providers who may want to use our fiber for backhaul, temporarily or permanently until their construction plans catch up, will be positively impacted.

The rates Bug Tussel intends to charge will be reasonable, and will include shorter-term lease agreements, longer-term IRUs, and fiber swap agreements. By including 4 access points throughout the middle-mile route, the capacity available for expansion will be easily accessible to any and all who may have an interest.

**e. For middle mile routes, state the amount of fiber capacity, by number of fiber strands in a cable, that the applicant has been reserved for public use. Describe any commitment or tentative discussion indicating the local government or State agency that might use those fiber strands, and for what purpose. Describe any restrictions or limits that may limit the public use (e.g. a possible use conflicts with an existing program covering the same subject matter).**

Through Bug Tussel’s public private partnership with Taylor County, 24 dark fiber strands are reserved for the County at no cost. This commitment to free access for Taylor County is contracted for 30 years.

Moreover, Bug Tussel engaged with Taylor County in the planning stages of this grant application to design a network that accomplishes numerous County objectives, better allowing the County to utilize the fiber they are given.

**f. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of individuals to access health care service from home, including any impact upon the costs of those services.**

National studies provide evidence of cost savings with the use of telehealth services. In a pre-COVID-19 study of 40,000 Cigna beneficiaries, the 20,000 beneficiaries who used the MDLive telehealth platform had 17% lower costs when compared with non-virtual care. Virtual care users also experienced a 36% net reduction in ED use per 1,000 people compared to non-virtual care users (Healthcare IT News). The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Report of the Taskforce on Telehealth Policy discusses a variety of evidence that the use of telehealth services lowers the overall cost of care. We are confident that this national data can be extrapolated to this project area. Considering that in-person health care services are 20 or more miles away for many residents Taylor County, use of telehealth also results in savings related to travel and time away from work or school.

**g. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.**

There are many online educational programs currently available for students of all ages in the project area. Several school districts have on-line learning labs, where a student can be physically located in their high school but take a class for college credit. While K-12 schools have largely returned to in-person instruction, some families prefer an on-line option. With improved internet access, families in the project area may wish to open-enroll in accredited online schools such as Acellus Academy, Virtual Charter Schools, or the Wisconsin Connections Academy.

Adult professional continuing education has made a major shift to online course delivery, and will be aided by this project. Rural health care providers at all levels, from nursing assistants to sub-specialty physicians, REALTORS, HVAC technicians, accountants, firefighters, childcare providers and others need access to highspeed internet for continuing education to maintain credentials and improve skills.

**h. A description of actions taken by a city, village, town, or county in support of the grant application that have not been discussed in the context of a public-private partnership above, including but not limited to:**

This project is the result of a true partnership between Bug Tussel and Taylor County. From planning and design forward, including the incorporation of the Phase I project, Bug Tussel and the County have been engaged, and will continue to be engaged to complete the shared goal of expanded broadband access throughout Taylor County.

Moreover, Bug Tussel will continue to partner with Taylor County following the completion of the construction project. Bug Tussel works diligently to level the playing field so that rural areas can utilize the same types of services as urbanized areas and therefore able to fully compete economically and socially to attract and retain residents and businesses. Through its community outreach component, Bug Tussel University, Bug Tussel will work with Taylor County to provide educational seminars ranging from basic classes (“How to use the internet” and “How to use social media”) to more advanced curriculum. Bug Tussel University personnel are always very engaged in the communities in which Bug Tussel operates, seeking user feedback on ways to assist them in connecting technology and the community.

- i. **Letters and messages in support of the application submitted by prospective customers, local government officials, and other interested persons.**

Please see the attached Letters of Support from schools, businesses, and health care institutions that will benefit from this project, collectively attached as **Exhibit B**.

**EXHIBIT LIST**

- A. **Agreement to Establish Public Private Partnership for the Purpose of Applying for a Broadband Expansion Grant**
- B. **Letters of Support**

EXHIBIT A -

**AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE  
PURPOSE OF APPLYING FOR A BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT**

THIS PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ("Agreement") is made this 3rd day of February, 2022 ("Effective Date") by and between Taylor County, Wisconsin (the "County"), a political subdivision of the State of Wisconsin, and Hilbert Communications, LLC, a Wisconsin limited liability company ("Hilbert"). The County and Hilbert are collectively referred to as the "Parties".

**RECITALS**

- A. The County seeks to promote development of high-speed broadband services to unserved and underserved areas within its boundaries and believes that cooperation with private-sector partners is necessary for the development of a county-wide broadband network that meets the needs of the County, its resident, and its businesses.
- B. To encourage and facilitate deployment of high-speed broadband service in unserved and underserved areas within the County, the County and Hilbert seek to enter into a public-private partnership to construct broadband infrastructure to facilitate the future development by Hilbert and/or other third-party internet service providers (the "Project").
- C. The full scope of the Project is yet to be defined but will be defined in the final partnership agreement between the Parties ("Final Partnership Agreement").
- D. The Parties intend that Hilbert, with the County as its public partner, apply to the State of Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant Program ("Grant Program") to obtain a grant to be used to pay for a portion of the cost of constructing the Project.
- E. The County finds the Project to be in the public interest of the residents and businesses of Taylor County.

**AGREEMENT**

THE PARTIES agree as follows:

- 1. **Purpose.** By this Agreement, the County and Hilbert agree to form a public-private partnership so that Hilbert can apply to the Grant Program to obtain funds to be applied toward construction of the Project. The County agrees that, as Hilbert's public partner, it will cooperate with Hilbert in preparation of the grant application.
- 2. **Project.** The Project will be developed by Hilbert. The estimated cost of the Project is \$11,600,000.
- 3. **Project Funding.** In its grant application, Hilbert shall request a grant for Twenty Percent (20%) of the estimate project cost. If the Grant is awarded and if the Project receives final approval from each Party's respective governing body, each Party agree in principle to be responsible for a portion of the estimated project costs, subject to further review.



4. **Authorization.** Each Party represents that it has the authority to execute this Agreement.
5. **Records.** Hilbert shall provide the County with a copy of its application to the Grant Program at the same time the application is submitted to the PSC.
6. **Termination.** This Agreement shall become effective on the Effective Date and shall terminate if Hilbert's grant application is unsuccessful. If the grant application is successful, this Agreement shall terminate one (1) year after the grant award or in the event that the Parties enter in a Final Partnership Agreement before the one (1) year period expires.
7. **Entire Agreement.** There are no representation or understandings of any kind not stated in this Agreement.
8. **Governing Law.** This Agreements shall be governed by the laws of the State of Wisconsin.
9. **Counterparts.** This Agreement may be executed in two or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

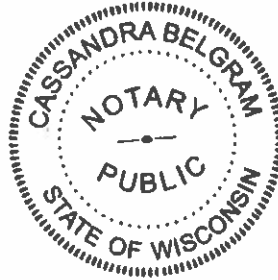
[SIGNATURE PAGE FOLLOWS]

**TAYLOR COUNTY**

The undersigned Taylor County officials have executed this Agreement pursuant to duly adopted Resolution No. 77, on this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of February 2022.

Jim Metz Chair  
Jim Metz, Chairman  
Taylor County Board of Supervisors

Attest:  
Andria M. Farrand  
Andria Farrand, County Clerk



STATE OF WISCONSIN )  
 ) SS.  
TAYLOR COUNTY )

Personally came before me on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, the above named Jim Metz / Andria Farrand, to me known to be the persons who executed the foregoing instrument and acknowledge the same.

Cassandra Belgram  
Notary Public, State of Wisconsin  
My Commission Expires: March 17, 2023

**HILBERT COMMUNICATIONS, LLC**

[Signature]

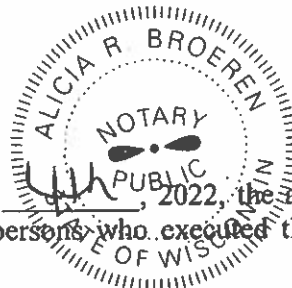
Dated: 2/4/2022

Attest:  
Alicia R. Broeren  
Notary Public

STATE OF WISCONSIN )  
 ) SS.  
BROWN COUNTY )

Personally came before me on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the above named Mitchel Olson, to me known to be the persons who executed the foregoing instrument and acknowledge the same.

Alicia R. Broeren  
Notary Public, State of Wisconsin  
My Commission Expires: 10.24.22





# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882

March 10, 2022

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
Water, Telecommunications, and Consumer Affairs Division  
Post Office Box 7854  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7854

Dear Public Service Commission:

Taylor County has presented us with a broadband plan that would go a long way to address the lack of high-speed internet access and connectivity for large portions their county in Northcentral Wisconsin through a partnership with service providers WANRack and Bug Tussel. We are writing to express our full support of their Broadband Expansion Grant application, which will be critically important to seeing this plan come to fruition.

Unfortunately, rural Taylor County currently has one of the lowest internet availability rates in Wisconsin. To address this problem, the County has already built a \$9 million middle mile network which allows them to provide fiber to the home as well as fixed wireless access to a portion of its residents.

Taylor County is now partnering with WANRack and Bug Tussel to invest an additional \$14 million to expand access to an overwhelming majority of county residents by the end of 2024. This project – known as the “ROAD to Digital Equity Project” – is the development of 76.2 miles of fiber-optic middle mile; completing a ring throughout Taylor County. This phase of the project will allow them to provide residents and businesses with speeds of up to one gigabyte along the route and will include complete coverage of Rib Lake, one of the largest municipalities in the county.

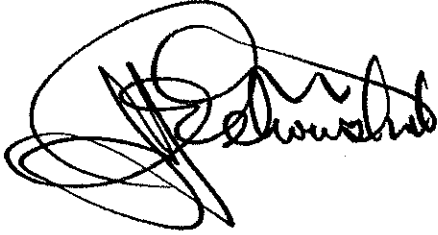
Funding this project in Taylor County will allow for enhanced healthcare, increased basic and higher educational opportunities through distance and virtual learning, and improved public safety assistance. As an underserved rural area with limited modern internet services, residents are facing many challenges including limited medical resources and distance between patients, physicians, specialists, and facilities. Because of the rural nature of the area, students do not receive equitable broadband resources, compared to students in more urban areas. This project will also enable greater collaboration and teamwork between community service centers, public safety offices, and municipal offices. Therefore, it is extremely important that state broadband grant funding be obtained to assist in providing much-needed broadband service to this area.

Finally, the model Taylor County has presented is considered “open access” in order to encourage quicker deployment of countywide fiber to the premise. This factor is important as it encourages immediate economic opportunities for residents and businesses alike.

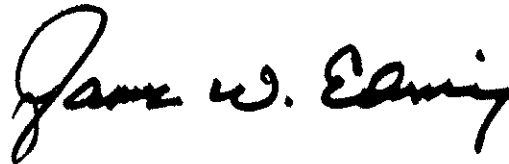
Therefore, we ask you to consider Taylor County's proposal for their fiber project. It would bring reliable high-speed, internet to many residents and businesses without current access, as well as offer tremendous benefits to the schools, hospitals, and communities across the county.

We sincerely appreciate your consideration. Should you have any questions or if we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Petrowski", with a large, loopy flourish at the beginning.

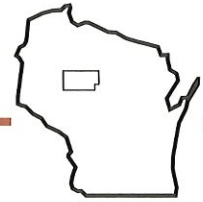
Senator Jerry Petrowski  
29<sup>th</sup> Senate District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Edming", written in a cursive style.

Representative James Edming  
87<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



# Taylor County Board



To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter to support the Taylor County Broadband Grant application. The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "**Open Access**" to **encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

The grant application being submitted from Bug Tussell is supported by the Taylor County Board and the Taylor County Broadband Committee

Taylor County has already built a 9-million-dollar Middle Mile Network in parts of Taylor County. Parts of this network are already supporting some of the schools in Taylor County. The rest of the original network should be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> 2022. This network will allow Taylor County to provide Fiber to homes and businesses along the middle mile network. The network will also enable us to use Fixed wireless access to provide high speed Broadband to some of the more rural areas of Taylor County. As you might know, Taylor County has some of the lowest internet access available to the residents in the State of Wisconsin.

Our plan is to invest up to an additional 14 million dollars to support bringing Broadband to Taylor County. This grant will help support bringing either FTH or fixed wireless internet to most of our residents by the end of 2024. This project would not be possible without the partnership of Taylor County and Bug Tussell.

I sincerely hope you will consider funding this project in Taylor County.

Michael K Bub  
Taylor County Board Supervisor  
Taylor County Broadband Committee Chairman



# Medford Area Public School District

124 West State Street  
Medford, WI 54451-1771  
Telephone: (715) 748-4620  
Fax: (715) 748-6839

District Website: [www.medford.k12.wi.us](http://www.medford.k12.wi.us)  
E-mail: [sullipa@medford.k12.wi.us](mailto:sullipa@medford.k12.wi.us)

*Pat Sullivan, District Administrator*  
*Audra Brooks, Dir. of Business Services*  
*Laura Lundy, Dir. of Curriculum and Instruction*  
*Joseph Greget, Dir. of Spec. Ed. & Student Services*

03/10/2022

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband Grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiber optic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional last-mile coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "open access" to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses. Even before the pandemic, our students struggled with completing online work at home, due to the lack of high speed internet. Therefore, many of our students would benefit by having broadband access for school, homework, and studying.

Sincerely,

Pat Sullivan  
District Administrator



Together  
for  
Children



## SCHOOL DISTRICT OF RIB LAKE

1236 Kennedy St. P.O. Box 278 Rib Lake, WI 54470  
[www.riblake.k12.wi.us](http://www.riblake.k12.wi.us) #RLSDPride

**Board of Education**  
President: Stacy Tlusty  
Vice President: Jason Dananay  
Clerk: Jackie Mohr  
Treasurer: Amanda Treffinger

**Rick Cardey**  
District Administrator  
715.427.3222  
715.427.3221 fax

**Kirsten Budimlja**  
Principal  
High School/ Middle School  
715.427.3220 • 715.427.5446  
715.427.5022 fax

**Jonathon Dallmann**  
Principal  
Elementary School  
Special Ed. Director  
715.427.5818

March 7, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter on behalf of the School District of Rib Lake in support of the Taylor County digital equity project. The funding of this project is a much needed hope for educational purposes, employment opportunities, and families.

When the pandemic hit and school closure was required, our staff and students struggled with the virtual education component due to the large number of students not having internet access or not having quality internet for video conferencing. We also struggled with data limits for the families who did have quality access. Even in year 2 of the pandemic, we still had many quarantined families who requested paper copies due to the internet inequities. Furthermore, our instructional options were also limited for many students by the amount of data and speed that their instructors could access at the same time. As a county, we were ill prepared for this event.

The School District of Rib Lake may also benefit by the fiber optic installation due to faster speed in the classrooms. Although the district has a 1 gb line for internet at 3 buildings, we lose a vast majority of that speed before it hits our district due to poor equipment at the local Frontier hub. We also have some very slow speeds in classrooms. It is very possible that the district will use an open access carrier instead of the government funded Wiscnet due to the faster speeds.

On a personal note, I live 5 miles from Rib Lake and often take work home. I pay \$150 a month for the internet and often have throttled down services at the end of the month due to data limitations. Streaming video on a consistent basis is not possible. Thankfully, I can afford the high cost of satellite internet. This is not the case with many of our rural residents. I am very excited about the possibility of having someone serve us at a reasonable cost and high speeds.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I would be happy to sell you on what your funding could improve in our district and communities.

Sincerely,

Rick Cardey  
District Administrator

Board Members: Nicole Glenzer      Nicole Scheller      Rollie Thums

*The School District of Rib Lake is an equal opportunity provider.*



## MEDFORD HOSPITAL & CLINICS

135 South Gibson Street, Medford, WI 54451  
P 715.748.8100 | F 715.748.8199 | aspirus.org

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter on behalf of Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics in support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional last-mile coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "Open Access" to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

As a rural health care provider, access to health care is a top priority. Without reliable internet in our communities, our patients won't have access to services via our telemedicine programs in lieu of in person visits. Reliable, high speed internet allows us to better service our patients by getting them the care they need, regardless of where they live.

Sincerely,

Aspirus Medford Hospital & Clinics  
135 S Gibson Street  
Medford, WI 54451





104 E. Perkins  
PO Box 172  
Medford, WI 54451  
715-748-4729

March 10, 2022

To Public Service Commission,

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application. The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional last-mile coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "Open Access" to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses. If the pandemic has taught us anything, we rely on internet in almost everything we do. It has shined a very bright spotlight on the ways it has not been working for us in this area. Virtual learning, working from home, Zoom meetings, scheduling appointments and juggling it all, the internet in our area is inadequate and in some spots non-existent. Our area would benefit immensely by having broadband readily available to the area and its residents.

Sincerely,

Billie Jean Hartwig  
Vice President  
Medford Area Chamber of Commerce



Northwest Regional Planning Commission

**NWRPC**

*keeping your future as our focus*

*Serving communities within and counties of  
ASHLAND, BAYFIELD, BURNETT,  
DOUGLAS, IRON, PRICE, RUSK, SAWYER,  
TAYLOR, & WASHBURN*

*And the Tribal Nations of  
BAD RIVER, LAC COURTE ORIELLES, LAC DU  
FLAMBEAU, RED CLIFF, & ST. CROIX*

March 7, 2022

Rebecca Cameron Valcq  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
Hills Farms State Office Building  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
North Tower – 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Madison, WI 53705

Re: Taylor County Broadband Expansion Grant Program Application (Rib Lake - Taylor County)

Chair Valcq:

On behalf of Northwest Regional Planning Commission, I am pleased to support a proposed PSC Broadband Expansion Grant Program application being submitted by Taylor County. The area proposed in the grant application needs fiber-to-the-premise broadband connectivity and has unserved and underserved households and businesses.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. Taylor County's application for funding includes additional last-mile coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "Open Access" to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

The investment proposed by Taylor County and an award of funds by the PSC will provide a significant economic benefit to residents and businesses! Please do not hesitate to contact me at [sjohnson@nwrpc.com](mailto:sjohnson@nwrpc.com) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Johnson  
Executive Director

**Village of Rib Lake**  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

P.O. BOX 205  
RIB LAKE, WI 54470  
715-427-5404

March 7, 2022

To the Public Service Commission,

I am writing this letter in support of the Taylor County Broadband grant application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional last-mile coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "Open Access" to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

As our community is doing many things to move forward and grow, high speed internet is a necessity. We are passionate about our community and feel that the opportunities that are provided elsewhere can also be provided here if we had the same internet access and speed as others. We would greatly appreciate your consideration to give us this opportunity to make our County the powerhouse that it truly can be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "W. Schreiner".

William Schreiner  
Village of Rib Lake President

**Village of Rib Lake**  
OFFICE OF THE CLERK-TREASURER

P.O. BOX 205  
RIB LAKE, WI 54470  
715-427-5404

March 7, 2022

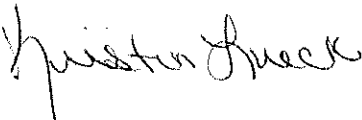
To the Public Service Commission,

I am writing this letter in support of the Taylor County Broadband grant application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional last-mile coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "Open Access" to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

As the Village Clerk/Treasurer, I am continuously watching webinars or taking online training classes to keep up to date on the laws and opportunities available for our community. The greatest of the learning opportunities is the Clerks/Treasurers Institute. Unfortunately, due to Covid, that learning opportunity has switched from in person training to online training. As much as I would prefer to be doing in person training, it was understandable to make the change. However, our internet is not able to sustain such learning and I feel I missed at least half of the classes trying to keep my internet running. This is just one of many examples that I could come up with. We are a small community that could be doing so much more. One step would be for us to have high speed internet that is reliable. Please consider providing us with this grant opportunity to move our communities forward.

Sincerely,



Kristin Lueck  
Village of Rib Lake  
Clerk/Treasurer

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "**Open Access**" to encourage faster **deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

You can add your own comments about how Broadband would help Taylor County, your Town, Village.  
Also, you can provide and information about how business might helped

TOWN OF MEDFORD

CHARMAN

Stanley A. Schmidt.

SUPERVISOR

Robert C. Hise 03-08-22

SUPERVISOR

John A. Olson 3-8-22

DATED

3/8/2022

**Village of Gilman**  
**P.O. Box 157**  
**Gilman, WI 54433**

March 8, 2022

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to encourage faster **deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

Broadband internet service has been needed desperately in northern Wisconsin for a long time. It is nearly impossible to attract industry and development without high-speed internet access. The Village of Gilman has strived to attract new investment in our community for some time only to be denied this opportunity because we do not have access to internet speeds high enough to serve their needs.

Please consider the pressing need for better internet coverage and approve this grant!

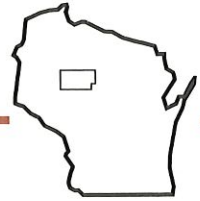
Jane DeStaercke

Village Gilman President





# Taylor County Board



March 8, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Chuck Zenner. I am on the Taylor County Board of Supervisors.

Three years ago, we created a Broadband Committee to look at the internet service in Taylor County. We discovered that we had the second worst coverage in the state of Wisconsin and found this to be unacceptable.

A feasibility study was conducted. After many meetings and travel to other areas it was decided to hire a firm out of Kansas to install our middle mile network. We needed to borrow 9.5 million dollars to start the project. After discussion and consideration our entire county board unanimously approved the spending. The original project should be completed in June.

At the present time we are working with another firm to bring fixed wireless to the county. Our intention is to provide internet service to county residents by bringing fiber to as many homes as possible. Our goal is to have this project done by the end of 2024. We feel this project is vital for the education of our students as well as many aspects of economic growth of Taylor County. Any funding that you could provide would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chuck Zenner". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Chuck Zenner  
Taylor County Supervisor

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "**Open Access**" to **encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

You can add your own comments about how Broadband would help Taylor County, your Town, Village. Also, you can provide and information about how business might helped

We, Mohnton Town Board voted to support this grant application at our town board meeting on March 8, 2022.

Lester Lewis, Gary Gretzinger, Trent Harris,  
Heather Dums, Marlene Grunig





1003 Railroad Street, P.O. Box 224  
Rib Lake, WI 54470-0224  
Phone: 715-427-5201  
Fax: 715-427-5882

March 8, 2022

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

Lakewood Credit Union has had a lot of difficulties when it comes to internet services. We currently pay for two providers as neither one is able to guarantee 100% coverage for the credit union. With the new fiberoptic line, we will be able to have one provider and upgrade not only the internet service but also additional features like phone and fax capabilities.

We are also able to upgrade different services regarding our disaster recovery aspects with backing up our systems to ensure we are safe and secure if disaster strikes our credit union. It will change a lot of background aspect regarding how we do business. Our members and community will not notice the difference but our staff will see a huge improvement to how things are done.

We fully support the efforts that Taylor County has been making to help get the fiberoptic line services throughout our county.

Sincerely,

Amy Ketterhagen  
President  
Lakewood Credit Union



■ Managed Forests: Your Legacy, Their Future!

March 7, 2022

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter in support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiber optic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing new or better **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to encourage **faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

I have been a business owner in the Town of Rib Lake for the last 12 years. Broadband/DSL service has continually declined over those years with an increase cost for less service. During a time when online connection has become a staple for much of the World, we need to close the gap between the current condition of service/infrastructure provided and where the current demand is today. This next step in completing coverage is essential to our business being able to efficiently succeed.

Sincerely,

*Peter Anderson*

Peter Anderson

Sound Forest Management, LLC

W3643 Kapitz Rd.

Rib Lake, WI 54470

Phone: 715-681-0674

Email: [peter@soundforestmanagement.com](mailto:peter@soundforestmanagement.com)

Web: [www.soundforestmanagement.com](http://www.soundforestmanagement.com)

[www.soundforestmanagement.com](http://www.soundforestmanagement.com)

[peter@soundforestmanagement.com](mailto:peter@soundforestmanagement.com)

W3643 Kapitz Rd, Rib Lake, WI 54470

715.681.0674



**TO: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION;**

**I'm writing this letter to support the Taylor County  
Broadband grant Application.**

**American Sports Laminate, LLC is truly affected by the poor  
service we receive.**

**This in turn causes us to offer poor service to our  
customers.**

**We need faster service, and service that does not drop us  
every time we try to print UPS orders for our customers.**

**This causes orders to take hours instead of minutes to  
process on our end....very costly in a time when we need to  
be as efficient as possible.**

**Thanks so much for any help!**

**Sincerely,**

**Niki Kutzke-Owner**

**American Sports Laminate, LLC**

**715-427-3787**

**[americansportslaminate@frontier.com](mailto:americansportslaminate@frontier.com)**



To Public Service Commission of Wisconsin;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to **encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

My business is relocating to Rib Lake from Madison, WI. Quality, high speed internet is essential in order for my business to operate in an efficient manner. Having access to better services will draw more people and businesses to Taylor County. Rural communities have been neglected far too long.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter Meyer', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Peter Meyer

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter to support the Taylor County Broadband Grant application. The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

As a member of the Taylor County Broadband Committee, business owner, and father of 10, I am deeply invested in this project and have been for several years.

We realize the great need this community has for access to the internet and would greatly benefit from this grant in helping us reach our overall goal of affordability and accessibility.

This project would not be possible without the partnership of Taylor County, Wanrack, and Bug Tussell.

I sincerely hope you will consider funding this project in Taylor County.



Stokhaus Media, LLC  
James Stokes | Ph: 715.570.5718  
[www.stokhausmedia.com](http://www.stokhausmedia.com)

**TO: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION;**

**I'm writing this letter to support the Taylor County  
Broadband grant Application.**

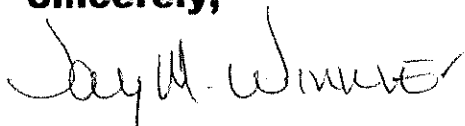
**Rib Lake Plywood, Inc. is truly affected by the poor service  
we receive.**

**This in turn causes us to offer poor service to our  
customers.**

**We are truly at a business disadvantage with the slow  
service we currently have.**

**Thanks so much for any help!**

**Sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay M. Winkler", with a checkmark at the end.

**Jay M. Winkler - Owner**

**Rib Lake Plywood, inc.**

**715-427-3787**

**[americansportslaminate@frontier.com](mailto:americansportslaminate@frontier.com)**

To Public Service Commission:

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband Grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to the Digital Equality Project is the deployment of 76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing gigabit service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional last-mile coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is "Open Access" to encourage faster deployment of countrywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

I know this personally affects my business as I am ordering parts, doing invoices & working with my customers & business all day long with the internet. I also know this affects many other businesses in town & can affect business growth in the community. We must get better services to help get more businesses in town to help the community. I know it also affects the residents & the school in Rib Lake. There are many times when the internet capacity affects the learning ability of the kids at the school. At this time with progress being made in all capacities, it is not right that we do not have the ability to get better internet for the kids.

Thank you for your time.

Jamie Heiser

J & P Auto Inc.

Owner

715-427-5707

[jpautoinc@fronternet.net](mailto:jpautoinc@fronternet.net)

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to **encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

**All of the above mentioned project will help bolster a better educational, business and residential atmosphere that will keep Taylor County an area that appeals to residents and the future workforce that is needed and completed for from all areas of the nation. A better communication network is a Must in our Community!**

**Thank You for helping us move forward!**

**Steven Deml**

**Town of Hammel Chairperson**



To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to encourage **faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

Internet services are very limited in the Rib Lake Village and town. Our current options are low speed or extremely expensive. Plus, our high speed internet is limited on data use. This has prevented us from expanding our business and/or adding employees. Our local economy is in desperate need of high speed internet that is affordable.

Sincerely,

Kelley Patrick

Visionary Design Concepts, LLC

Rib Lake, WI 54470

## Farrand Andria

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**From:** Karen Schneider <tko54470@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 9:02 AM  
**To:** Farrand Andria  
**Subject:** Broadband

**[Outside Sender]**

Hi Andria,

Rolli Thums spoke at our Town Hall meeting this Wednesday March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022 about the upcoming Broadband expansion. I am writing to express the desire of the Board to move forward with this program. Chairman Joe Knorn moved, Supervisor Doug Polacek seconded to approve the County's efforts in moving forward with this project. Motion carried.

Clerk-Karen Schnieder

Thank You,  
Karen Schneider  
Clerk, Town of Rib Lake  
N7500 Timber DR., Rib Lake, WI 54470  
715-427-3635

## Farrand Andria

---

**From:** Rib Lake True Value <riblakehardware@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 7:24 AM  
**To:** Farrand Andria  
**Subject:** Letter for Broadband Grant

**[Outside Sender]**

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support for the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

My Taylor County retail hardware business, Rib Lake True Value, continues to be impacted negatively by the current lack of options for faster internet. As of today, my business has only one option for connection to an internet provider and, unfortunately, this one option connects at slow speeds that negatively impact my business. The following are specific examples of how my business would benefit from connecting to a faster internet.

1. The current slow internet upload speeds of less than 1Mbps, do not allow my business the choice of purchasing a lesser cost retail operating business software. As a result, a \$12,000 server was my business's only option. Of note, my retail operating software mandates that my store's credit card transmission utilize hard wired connectivity. A site-to-site ISP provider is not an option for my business.
2. The current slow internet speeds cause my wireless computers to randomly drop their connection. Consequently, the resulting stop in internet connection stops my employees and my business from working and forces both to wait until reconnection occurs.
3. The current slow internet speed does not allow my business to choose a retail operating system that backs up its data to the cloud. As a result, my business is forced to utilize CDs to store all daily sales, inventory and purchasing data. This method brings with it the inherent risk of catastrophic data loss if the CDs were to physically break for any reason.

Faster fiber optic internet speeds would benefit my business for the above reasons, while at the same time, helping to ensure that my business continues to provide a needed service within my local Taylor County community. The next closest retail hardware store for residents within the Rib Lake community is at minimum 20 miles away.

Thank you, Taylor County, for helping to bring faster fiber optic internet to my business and to my surrounding community.

Scott Schubert  
Rib Lake True Value

03.08.2022

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

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I live in Rib Lake; I work in Price County but have the option to work from home certain days. If internet would be a faster, it would make it a lot easier for me and others to work from home. If we could get better/faster internet it would also help the students here in Rib Lake if they are home sick or unable to go to school for whatever reason.

Thank you,

Multitek North America, LLC

Lisa Sodoma

Accounting Department

715-428-2000 X-1220

[lisa.sodoma@multitekinc.com](mailto:lisa.sodoma@multitekinc.com)

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support for the Taylor County Broadband Grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route. This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which encourages immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.

I own and run my own business where I sell industrial parts and accessories online through eBay and other e-commerce channels. My business and my family's livelihood depend on good consistent high speed internet. This fiberoptic high speed internet will be a huge blessing to our family and to our community. Today's economy is moving to the internet world, and adding this to Taylor County will make Taylor County attractive to people that can work remotely or who work from home, but need good reliable high speed Internet. Taylor County is a great place to raise a family and this will definitely positively effect the draw for people to move to and work here.

Sincerely,

Todd Henderson

Rib Lake Resident &

Owner - JBA Automation LLC

To Public Service Commission;

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Our business, Personalized Treasures LLC, is a gift shop in the village of Rib Lake, that specializes in personalized products. We currently have a line of site internet, that goes out with bad weather. We are planning an online launch of products but have been hesitant because of the current service. We believe that online sales would help our business grow, so we can give back more to our community.

Our home is in a rural location, in the township of Greenwood, Taylor County. We have even worse internet service there. We have one child in high school, and it is difficult for her to do homework. We have satellite internet, but it is very spotty with the weather, and it is quite expensive.

In conclusion, the faster we can get broadband services to our area, the better. The whole community would benefit from it!

Sincerely,

Steve & Michelle Schreiner

Personalized Treasures LLC  
814 McComb Ave  
Rib Lake, WI 54470

To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

The Taylor County R.O.A.D. to Digital Equality Project is the deployment of **76.2 miles of fiberoptic middle-mile**, completing a ring throughout Taylor County, while providing **gigabit** service to homes and business locations along that route.

This phase of the project includes additional **last-mile** coverage in Rib Lake, providing complete coverage in the Village. This project is **"Open Access"** to **encourage faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise**, which encourages **immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses**.

I own and operate Java Journey, a coffee shop located at 720 McComb Avenue, Rib Lake. We serve the people in Rib Lake, those that vacation in the area and the residents in the surrounding communities. This internet service would be a huge asset to our community; to residents and businesses alike. A broadband internet option that provides quality and fast internet service is a much needed and desired service in the Rib Lake community. As a business owner I often hear of the ongoing struggle many community people and many people that vacation here (and help boost our local economy) have with the current internet offerings.

In addition to being an asset to the people of Rib Lake, and to those that enjoy vacationing here and enjoying all our area has to offer, this broadband internet offering would be EXTREMELY helpful to me as a business owner. I use the internet all day for many of the day to day tasks of running Java Journey. I rely on the internet to run our phone system, run our credit card terminal, and daily ordering of products and supplies. Java Journey also offers the use of the internet to our customers, which is used by many people daily. An improved internet service to Rib Lake that Java Journey could use would be a huge benefit and step forward in the Rib Lake community.

Thank you,

Lori Henderson

Owner - Java Journey

720 McComb Ave

Rib Lake WI 54470



To Public Service Commission;

I'm writing this letter of support of the Taylor County Broadband grant Application.

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My husband has his own logging business and faster internet will help me be able to complete tasks online for his business at a much faster speed. I also work from home and this will help me not have so much down time from such slow speeds.

Cameron Thums Logging  
Cameron and Page Thums